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THE

SERPENTINE

“AS IT IS” AND “AS IT OUGHT TO BE,”

AND THE

BOARD OF HEALTH

“AS IT IS” AND “AS IT OUGHT TO BE.”

BY

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OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

“Salus populi suprema lex.”

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PREFACE.

IN the hope that additional publicity would provoke a speedier removal of a notorious nuisance, too long tolerated on the lands of the Crown, I have extracted from the most popular of our medical journals, its leading articles on the Serpentine. This has been done with the permission of the Editor of "THE LANCET." I have appended some additions which may prove to be both useful and interesting.

I have also considered that the time has come (both for the public welfare and the honour of the profession) to lay before the public and its ever vigilant protector, the press, a clear and concise statement of what the Board of Health has done since its institution.

As it has been shown what the Serpentine is, and what it ought to be, it may be attended with public advantage to show what the Board of Health is, and what it ought to be.

E. J. T.

42, *Gloucester Road, Hyde Park,*
Nov. 28, 1848.

THE SERPENTINE

AND

THE BOARD OF HEALTH.

IF it be necessary for the full development of every species of social power—if it be necessary for the attainment of the highest blessings of civilization, that men should live congregated by thousands and by hundreds of thousands, the Divine Architect has constituted them in order that they may do so with impunity, provided sanitary principles are not too extensively infringed. Among other paramount conditions for health, it has at all times been considered the bounden duty of governments to provide, in the immediate vicinity of towns, open spaces, where the public may both inhale pure air and enjoy the full benefit of exercise. Whatever may be the name of these pleasure-grounds—Prytaneum or Campus Martius, Pincio or Boboli, Prater or Englische-Garten,

Champs-Élysées or Hyde Park, every capital has some green spot whereon its inhabitants may breathe free air, and give play to their limbs, and renewed vigour to their minds.

No capital (Munich excepted) can boast of pleasure-grounds equally beautiful and extensive in its immediate vicinity, as those of London. We pass them daily without sufficient notice; but foreigners who visit our shores, or those amongst us who have spent long years in distant climes, never fail to admire so happy a combination of rural beauties as are presented by the parks in the immediate vicinity of the greatest metropolis in the world.

By meddling interference, however, the lake which forms so prominent a feature of Hyde Park, has been converted into a *Dead Sea in miniature*.* It looks

* This expression—Dead Sea in Miniature—is really paying the Serpentine too high a compliment, for the waters of the Dead Sea are as limpid as those of the Mediterranean, and as blue; indeed, the large quantity of salt they hold in solution sufficiently precludes the impurities for which the Serpentine is so notorious. Contrary to the assertions of some travellers, the waters of the Dead Sea do contain living creatures, for one of my friends, while bathing there, was bitten by a small crab. The density of the water is very great, and its buoyant power is as considerable as reported. The water is so aerid, that it literally burns the tongue; it does not, however, (at least did not in my case and that of my fellow-bathers,) produce the persistent irritation of the skin described by some. In conjunction with my friend Dr. Roeser, physician to his majesty King Otho, I found its temperature 78° Fahrenheit; the barometer marked 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. From this we might conclude, that it is 600 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, not 1400 feet, as has been stated.

beautiful enough—at a distance!—but it carries in its prolific bosom seeds of destruction, which it exhales from its surface for every passing wind to disseminate afar.

After having briefly alluded to the Serpentine as it was, we will point out its present condition, and then, availing ourselves of our professional privilege, prescribe,—and without a fee,—a remedy for the evil, under the head of “Serpentine as it ought to be.”

THE “SERPENTINE AS IT IS.”*—Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens adjoin the most fashionable parts of London, and separate from each other the modern towns of Bayswater and Belgravia, which, in point of size and architectural beauty, can vie with any of the continental capitals. Hyde Park obtained its name from having been the Hyde Farm of the Monastery of Westminster, and was probably first enclosed during the time it was in the occupation of the abbot and convent. At the Reformation it became vested in the Crown; and it was made public property in the time of the Commonwealth. It is deeply delved, and abundantly supplied with springs renowned for ages. Many persons every morning drink of these wells, or have the water brought home for their daily use. A part is conveyed by pipes to Buckingham Palace, for drinking purposes, and to Westminster Abbey, the Dean of which still holds a spring, formally granted by one of our Edwards to the Abbots of Westminster.

* Lancet, Oct. 21, 1848.

In 1663, Charles the Second granted, to Thomas Hawes, of Westminster, all the springs, waters, conduits, in the Park, to hold for ninety-nine years, rendering to the Exchequer 6s. 8d. per annum. All these pipes and water-courses were re-purchased by the Crown about the year 1730, for £2500, and removed to complete the Serpentine River, which was begun, by command of George the Second, in that year. The expense of the excavation, four hundred yards in length and forty feet deep, was estimated at £6000. The Serpentine thus formed, by uniting a string of ponds, had then, perhaps, an appropriate name, it being a winding stream. Since then, however, this serpentine river has been transformed into an almost stagnant canal, while to the canal of St. James's Park has been lately given a *serpentine* appearance.

At the Bayswater extremity, a stream descending from the Highgate and Hampstead hills flowed into it, thus giving its name (Bays-water) to the suburb of which it now forms the main sewer. The Serpentine, besides its natural springs, also received the overplus of certain reservoirs, of which one was situated where Trinity Church now stands. Winding its way towards what is now called Albert Gate, the Serpentine left Hyde Park, and at last emptied itself into the Thames; so that, however we may dignify this water by the name of *river*, it was then *de facto*, and is now *de jure*, a part and portion of the Ranelagh sewer. Until 1834, it received the filth of a large district,

when the complaints of an increasing population became so loud, that a collateral sewer was made under the Bayswater-road, to divert from the Serpentine the refuse of a town; but the sewer into which it was diverted not being calculated to carry off this increase of filth, a communication was left between the sewer and the Serpentine, under the Gothic bridge.

About a year since, the effluvia from under the arches of this bridge were so offensive, that to satisfy the just complaints of the inhabitants, the Commissioners of Woods and Forests closed the arches with wooden gates, which commonly remain shut, but are opened, after heavy rains, to allow the overplus of the sewer to empty itself into the Serpentine.

About 1820 the waterfall was made, and it acted very creditably till 1834, when the Serpentine ceased to receive its accustomed tribute from the Bayswater sewer. To make up for the deficiency in the supply of water, consequent upon this circumstance, Government contracted with the Chelsea Waterworks Company, to throw into the pond in front of Kensington Palace a certain quantity of water, which is conducted by pipes to the top of a strange kind of dumb waiter, and afterwards dribbles down in just sufficient quantity to disturb the mass of filth by which it is surrounded.

The Serpentine loses its supplies by the constant evaporation from its surface, and by the immense quantity of water removed for watering the Parks. It also partially supplies the Knightsbridge Barracks

and the Horse Guards, and it replenishes the pond in Buckingham private gardens, and the ornamental water of St. James's Park. The result of this debtor and creditor account, for what is now facetiously called the Serpentine River, is a state of complete stagnation.

We have, then, in the midst of Hyde Park, fifty acres of stagnant water and other matters, the depth of which varies from one to thirty feet; and of this, in the deepest parts, from ten to fifteen feet were found, by Sir John Rennie, (in his Survey, made in October last;) to consist of thick, inky, putrid mud—in some places so much as nine feet of mud under eighteen inches of water! Such is the state of a considerable part of the portion of the Serpentine in Kensington Gardens. This is not mud of an ordinary description, but a compound of decayed animal and vegetable refuse;—accumulations from the sewers; the dead animals often thrown into the water; the fish¹ which die during the warm season;—and these substances, amalgamating with leaves and other vegetable matter, form a bed of corruption of most poisonous and deadly activity.*

* Those who think I am exaggerating in a good cause, can easily obtain some of this black mud. On being kept a few hours, its stench will soon convince them of the veracity of the above assertions; they have been confirmed by an analysis still in process at the laboratory of the *Pharmaceutical Society* under the superintendence of Mr. Theophilus Redwood, and kindly conducted by my friend Mr. Thomas Savory. I have been

Considered in a chemical point of view, it is a natural laboratory, wherein the sulphur of the sulphates in the water uniting with the hydrogen of decomposed water, forms sulphuretted hydrogen—a gas which, even in the smallest quantities, is known to destroy or injure living beings, and has often caused the sudden death of persons who have descended into foul sewers.

This ten-feet-deep reservoir of slime is also a hot-bed wherein are perpetually generated those impure growths well known to be fostered by putrefaction. Millions of *confervæ*² daily spring from its surface, and remaining suspended in the water, thicken it by green clouds of vegetable matter: in the sporules of which live multitudes of infusorial animalculæ. These products of stagnation rising to the surface, give to the water, when calm, and seen in a gleam of sunshine, all the varied hues of the rainbow, or else cover it with one extended coat of green. When the breeze wafts this scum to either side, it forms

assured that the Serpentine mud contains all the elements of a very rich manure.

That part of this pamphlet relative to the Serpentine appeared as leaders in the LANCET, of October and November, 1848. They attracted considerable public attention, having been copied into *The Times*, *The Observer*, *The Morning Herald*, *The Sun*, *The Spectator*, and other papers; and were favourably commented on by *The Times*, in a leading article of October the 25th. Let us hope that the same articles, thus publicly praised, will be productive of a commensurate amount of public good.

there a thick mass, resembling, in colour and appearance, "green-pea soup," as it is called by the bathers. And this mass it is which causes that faint smell which so often sickens those who walk near the Serpentine, particularly at sunset and sunrise, when exhalations are most active and perceptible.

" And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill!
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt."

Those who see the Serpentine as it appears after much rain, and when the weather is cool, can scarcely imagine what it is on a hot summer's day, when the sun, giving increased activity to all the spurious growths of infection, draws out of this treacherous piece of water its worst and most pestilential exhalations.

The Serpentine has been, in fact, transformed into a vast metropolitan laboratory of cholera and other epidemic miasm. The Board of Health, even, will agree with us in this, for we read it in their very first manifesto, that " The chief predisposing causes of every epidemic, and especially of cholera, are, *damp, moisture, filth, animal and vegetable matters in a state of decomposition, and, in general, whatever produces atmospheric impurity*; all of which have the effect of lowering the health and vigour of the system, and of increasing the susceptibility to disease, particularly among the young, the aged, and the feeble." ³

Good example should accompany precept, and the

Board of Health, or of "Works," should look into the evil of which we complain, with an intention to apply a speedy remedy.

At the eastern extremity of the Serpentine, some little dirty water silently trickles down between the green stones of what once produced a cascade, gliding into a small pond of still more concentrated infection, and commonly called the "Leg-of-mutton Pond," the effluvia from which are even worse than those of the Serpentine, and painfully affect the olfactory nerves of the numerous water-drinkers, who repair in search of refreshment to the neighbouring spring. The heavy green appearance of this Lethean ditch forcibly recalls schoolboy reminiscences:—

"Hic specus horrendum, et sævi spiracula Ditis
Monstratur, ruptoque ingens Acheronte vorago
Pestiferas aperit fauces."

Virg. Æneid, vii. 568-70.

Or we might fancy it the Styx; but the Charon of Hyde Park receives *his* tribute for the ignoble occupation of carefully skimming daily from this corrupted puddle its green pellicle, for fear it should bear *too strong a testimony against those who are personally answerable to the public* for the prolonged existence of so foul a nuisance.

This turbid mass of slush is at intervals allowed to pass the opening valves of the lock under the bridge in Rotten-row, (a happy coincidence of names,) and we then lose sight of it for a time, as it enters the Ranelagh sewer, heavily winding its dark way to the

Thames,—that common receptacle of all London filth. But though it escapes our optics, we are not suffered to lose its influence altogether; for near the mouth of this Ranelagh sewer (one of the worst in London) the Chelsea Waterworks Company are ready to receive it, and no doubt re-pump a considerable portion of its contents, and by a most *vicious* circle, carefully re-convey it to the Serpentine, which thus seems wedded to infection. Was it worth while to spend £7000, in order to divert the contents of the Bayswater sewer, if we are to pay £600 a year to a public company, to get back an instalment of the same pernicious refuse?*

If there be a point on which doctors do not disagree,† it is, that whenever vegetable matter and

* Nor is this the only instance of the strange way of providing water for the public; we find in 1827, Mr. Wright, in a very able pamphlet, exposing the source of the Grand Junction Company's supply. He called his little work, "*Dolphin; or the Grand Junction Nuisance;*" and showed, that instead of the said Company's boasted pure water of the Rivers Colne and Brent, and of the streams of the Vale of Ruislip, its actual and only source of supply *was at the Dolphin, at the foot of Chelsea Hospital, close to one of the great common sewers of London.* The publication of this grand exposure caused considerable consternation, especially amongst the Company's customers; and the Company branded the writer with epithets of no very respectable character. Strange to say, of late, the Patent Filtering Water-works, from which her Majesty's ships are supplied with water, was also *carefully* established in the immediate vicinity of a *sewer*. From Dr. Gavin's able lecture on the unhealthiness of London we learn also that one of the noblest public charities in London has, within the last year or two, sunk large cesspools within a few feet of the well which supplies the whole establishment with water as well for drinking as for domestic purposes.

† *Lancet*, Oct. 28, 1848.

animal substances are allowed to decay in stagnant water, the subtle, invisible, inodorous agent of malaria, *is constantly* generated. The baneful effects of this agent are not necessarily connected with any offensive smell by which it may be accompanied, for even when unattended by odour, it still works destruction. Whether this subtle poison arise from the fens of Lincolnshire, or the swamps of Walcheren, or the sunderbunds of the Ganges, or at the mouth of the Niger, it springs from a like bed of corruption, and produces similar diseases of an adynamic nature, modified of course by climate.⁴

Similar exhalations arise from the fifty acres of the Serpentine, and from the canal in St. James's Park, and also the pond in the palace garden, which are at present supplied from that lake. Bayswater is protected from these poisonous exhalations, on account of its elevated situation; but, after hovering for a time in mid-air, they rain down their pestilential miasm on Kensington, on those splendid mansions now erecting near Rutland Gate, on Belgravia, and even on Buckingham Palace. Ill-fated Sovereign! whom a triple sceptre and millions of devoted subjects cannot protect from the effects of the ignorance and apathy of the immediate servants of the Crown. As if it were not sufficient that the foundations of her palace should rest on the largest sewer of her overgrown metropolis,* her sapient Commissioners of Woods and Forests contrive to surround it by large masses of

* King's Scholars' Pond Sewer.

stagnant water, the effluvia from which must poison the very air which she and her children breathe! If such be the care a President of a Board of Health takes of his Sovereign, what care must we expect that he will take of his fellow-subjects?

The exhalations from the Serpentine must inevitably be prejudicial to those who seek exercise and pure air in its vicinity. The strong may resist their effects; but women and children, (whose integuments are known to be endued with a rapid power of absorption,) the delicate and the sickly, cannot fail to suffer from the effects of the slow, debilitating poison they inhale on its banks, when driving round the Serpentine with an empty stomach. Already have the fair votaries of Fashion been taught, by experience, to believe that they imbibe disease during their drives; and if Lord Carlisle does not soon remedy the evil, Fashion must yield to the Physician's veto.* In a public meeting held at Chelsea, on the 5th of June last, Drs. Copland, Hodgkin, and Lankester, and Mr. Woolley, unanimously expressed themselves as to the cause and intensity of this growing pest. Dr. Copland stated that he had under his care a person suffer-

* Last year, by a new regulation, boats were allowed on the Serpentine. This afforded an admirable opportunity for enjoying the manly exercise of rowing, and permitted to the fair sex the passive exercise of being rowed. Last year numerous water parties were to be seen on the Serpentine; but we (medical men) were obliged to interpose our disapproval of so close an inhalation of noxious vapour, and reluctantly to deprive youths of their exercise, women of their enjoyment, and watermen of their fares.

ing from ague, solely attributable to evening walks taken around the Serpentine. Dr. Hodgkin likened the effects he had himself experienced while crossing the Park to those perceived in the Campagna Romana; and he recounted various instances of disease and death caused by similarly situated stagnant pools. Lately, also, several of our medical friends have mentioned to us instances of diarrhœa suddenly induced by the sickening effects of the same offensive effluvia.

Within the last few years, a popular feeling has fortunately sprung up in favour of affording to the poor the benefits of bathing. Large sums of money have been collected, and public baths and washing-houses have been erected at a great expense; but the great gratuitous metropolitan bath of London has been allowed to go to ruin.

If Lord Ashley, who has so warmly espoused the bath and wash-house movement—if the Bishop of London, whose exertions have also been so praiseworthy in this cause,—had directed a part of the same energy towards the correction of an evil which will eventually deteriorate the property from which the latter derives a princely income, they would *perhaps* have been listened to, and the great metropolitan bath might have been preserved from pollution.

The reports of the Royal Humane Society show that there has been a gradual falling off in the number of bathers in the Serpentine. A few years since, there were of bathers annually, 500,000; in 1846, there were 350,000; in 1847, there were 226,000; this year

there are only 93,000! On a summer evening, there used to be 10,000 bathers, and 3000 early in the morning; and when bathing was allowed on Sunday evenings, 12,000 was the estimated number that commonly plunged into this water. It was curious to see the south shore of the Serpentine one mass of human flesh in motion; recalling to our recollection the religious crowds rushing into the purifying element in Eastern countries.⁵

It is evidently the duty of Government, when it gives to the public a piece of water for the purpose of bathing, to make it safe—as well for the bather's health, by the purity of the water, as for his life, by the proper levelling of its bottom.

Without dwelling at this moment on the known impurity of the water, and the filth the bathers have been lately obliged to swim from with disgust, and which we need not more minutely particularize, the Serpentine is now a *man-trap*—useful only inasmuch as it proves the utility of the Royal Humane Society, of which the Royal ranger of Hyde Park is one of the patrons.

From eighty to ninety accidents occur every year during the bathing season.* If out of this large num-

* There is an apparent discrepancy between this statement and the average of accidents, as shown by the tables in the Appendix; but it was formerly the custom to enter as received, only those who were taken into the receiving house, whereas now it is customary to enter as received all such as are saved by the instrumentality of the Royal Humane Society, even if they be not sufficiently ill to require being taken to the receiving house.

ber only five or six involve immediate death, we may thank the Royal Humane Society for the small average; but we must bear in mind, that of the large number of persons restored to life many die in the following months, not so much from cerebral disease, which is generally and most magically removed by judicious bleeding, but from chronic inflammation and congestion of the lungs, or from tubercles, if the subject is predisposed to consumption.

By referring to the tables at the end of this pamphlet it will be also seen that 127 accidents have occurred to skaters and⁶ 261 to bathers, during the last ten years, on the Serpentine and Kensington Gardens.

The unsafe state of the bottom of the river is the cause of these accidents. Close to those spots where the water is shallowest, are precipitous holes (formerly gravel-pits,) from twenty to thirty feet deep, and containing from ten to fifteen feet of black mud.

If the bather is seized by cramps, or from any other reason descends into this region of blackness, in vain does he attempt to regain the surface of the water,

——— *Facilis decensus Averni*

Sed revocare gradum—hic labor, hoc opus est!

Stamping with his feet only serves to plunge him deeper, and there he remains until he is hooked out by the officers of the Royal Humane Society, dark as the blackest Ethiopian. Some years ago an inquest was held on the body of a remarkably fine young man, who, in diving, stuck his head so firmly into the mud, that, in spite of his repeated efforts, he could not extricate

himself. The boats were out, the men on the spot directly; they could feel him kicking, but having no hold, they could not extricate him for ten minutes. He was, of course, dead. On another occasion a man threw himself from the bridge. His hat was found; but the bed of the water was vainly dragged for his body, the right place not having been guessed at. Several days afterwards, some workmen were idling on the bridge, and discerned something unusual under the water. It was the head of the man, standing bolt upright in the exact place where the suicide happened, his legs firmly fixed in the mud—so firmly, that the boat was nearly capsized when the men therein attempted to remove the body by cords placed around it. Unfortunately, this is not a solitary case of suicide in the Serpentine. There have been seventeen attempts in the present year by persons, of whom thirteen were recovered: in one case the act was prevented; and three individuals were found dead. And the table at the end of this pamphlet also shows that within the last ten years there have been 133 suicidal attempts. We should be certainly sorry to see the Commissioners of the Woods and Forests obliged to follow in the wake of the worthy corporation of the city of London, and wire over the Serpentine as the latter have wired over the Monument; but it would be better they did so if they intend not to fulfil their duty to the public in diminishing as much as possible the facilities for the completion of so awful a crime.

If the waters of the Serpentine are fraught with so much danger to health and life, who can wonder that the number of bathers should decrease? It is not agreeable to come out covered with green weed, however beautiful each particle of it may appear to the naturalist when seen through the microscope. It is not pleasant to feel that if, by accident, we should fall into any of the numerous man-traps, there is a great risk of remaining there. The least fastidious in point of smell and taste are often seen to turn away disgusted from the water they came to lave in: schools no longer bathe there. The Serpentine Bathing Club, which has been known formerly to muster *ninety* bathers, and even twenty-four on a Christmas morning! (*horresco referens*—we shiver whilst we write) is now reduced to *four*, whose love of water is stronger than their olfactory antipathies.

Will it be credited that Lord Carlisle is not only *First Commissioner of Woods and Forests*, and therefore interested (or should be so) in the proper conservation of public grounds,—he is not only President of the Board of Health, and therefore bound to set an example of removing nuisances, forbidden by his own official instructions,—but he is also the PATRON of the SERPENTINE BATHING CLUB!

This “*Patron of the Serpentine Bathing Club*” was written to, several years since, upon the subject, and, in reply, he owned that the *miasm* was most foul, and promised to exert himself for its removal. The public have not yet seen the effects of this promise.

On the 5th of June last, as we have before stated, a crowded meeting of the inhabitants of Chelsea and Knightsbridge took place, convened by Mr. Lilwall, the able secretary of the "Early Closing Association," at the Literary Institution, Sloane-street, with a view to remedy the evil; the Earl of Harrowby in the chair. A deputation was named, and instructed to seek an interview with Lord Carlisle on the matter. His lordship consented to present to the House of Commons a petition signed by 2000 respectable householders of Chelsea, Knightsbridge, &c.; but he kept the petition in his pocket for eight weeks, as appears from a letter in the *Times* of the 14th of August last. Then, being formally reminded of his promise, he presented the petition on the following day.

Such is the Serpentine, and such have been the manifold attempts made to remove or abate its nuisances! May we be allowed to hope that our own remonstrances will be attended with greater success—not on account of any merit they may possess, but because they are backed by the approach and presence of *cholera*? We do indulge a hope, that if the Thames is still to be kept a filthy ditch, the largest and wealthiest metropolis in the world may have to boast of, at least, one little lake of clean water!

THE "SERPENTINE AS IT OUGHT TO BE."—"We have abundantly shown that the Serpentine, the St. James's Canal, and the stagnant pool (five acres in

extent) in the Queen's private gardens,* are the great 'plague-works' of the West-end of London; for it is evident (to use the words of a contemporary, commenting on our statements) that 'if a medical and scientific board had been appointed to superintend the establishment of a manufactory of perpetual fever, they could not have proceeded after a more ingenious business-like fashion than has been adopted by the superintendent authorities of the Serpentine.' "†

We have shown the nature and extent of the disease. What remedy is to be prescribed? How is this Augean ditch to be cleansed of its accumulated abominations? Either by carting these away, or by covering them over. If the fifty acres of putrescent mud were at once exposed to the contact of the air, and the influence of the sun, and if all the latent seeds of infection were stirred up by the carting of it away, no doubt the neighbourhood would be decimated by fever, if not by cholera.‡ We therefore reject this plan, and propose that forthwith the water should gradually be drained off to allow the mass of mud to subside in the

* We are happy to find that the Queen's pond has been emptied, and is to be immediately cleansed of the mud it contains. But *the people's pond*—wherein thousands bathe—is it still left replete with its *Augean impurities*?

† Leader in *Times* of Oct. 25.

‡ In 1820 or 1821, a large pond, on the estate of the Duke of Newcastle, at Clumber, Nottinghamshire, was cleaned out, and the process brought on a bad fever, from which almost all the inhabitants of the Castle suffered.

deepest portions of the bed of the lake. This mud should then be covered over with gravel, so that instead of being thirty feet deep,* as it is now in certain portions, the Serpentine should be but twelve feet in depth in its centre, and so sloped as to become less and less deep towards the shores.†

While suggesting the necessity of filling up the deepest portions of the Serpentine, we must also recommend that certain portions which are too shallow should be excavated, to give them four or five feet of depth: the clay thus removed might be transferred to the deepest portions; for in the greatest part of the long water, particularly between the islands and the Gothic bridge, the bed of mud is only covered by about eighteen inches of water. This should be done during the ensuing months, and in the early spring it would be necessary to cover two-thirds of this levelled surface with a coat of concrete six inches thick. We say two-thirds, because many parts have a good gravel bottom, and need not be meddled with. The lime thus employed would neutralize all noxious gases, and this coat of concrete

* In page 583, of Faulkner's History of Kensington, (London, 1820,) we find it stated, that to retain the waters, the bed of the Serpentine was excavated to the depth of forty feet; but in the Survey lately made by Sir John Rennie, the depth was in no part found to exceed twenty-six feet six inches; thirteen feet six inches of mud beneath thirteen feet of water!

† This remedy, first suggested in the *Lancet*, Nov. 4, 1848, has met with the approval of the public press. The *Times*, the *Observer*, and the *Dispatch*, have commented on it favourably.

would also prevent the growth of those masses of weeds which corrupt the water by their decay, and have often proved fatal to the bather. At any future period, the cleansing of the Serpentine would then be merely sweeping its bed of concrete. These improvements might be effected at no great cost; for gravel is to be found on either side of the Serpentine, and the excavation thus made could be soon filled up with rubbish. On the whole southern bank, the depth of water should not exceed four feet, even at fifty feet from the shore; so that, in future, parents might there at least allow their children to bathe or skate without anxiety; and numerous watermarks, announcing the depth of water, should be conspicuously planted on the banks. If something similar were done to a portion of the Bayswater extremity of the Serpentine, it would afford to the inhabitants a convenient bathing spot, and to the Commissioners of the Woods and Forests an opportunity of atoning for having so long unmercifully inflicted disgusting odours upon the vicinity. Is it necessary to state that the Bayswater sewer should no longer, on any pretence, be allowed to discharge its filthy and corrupt current into our great metropolitan bath?

We have prescribed a remedy adequate to cure the existing evil; but as the duty of the doctor is also to prevent the recurrence of a complaint, we must, by a sufficient supply of water, insure the permanent salubrity of the Serpentine, so that miasmatic mists may no longer drop their baneful dews over the man-

sions of Belgravia, nor surround Buckingham Palace with a pestilential halo.*

As to the Queen's pond, the green surface of which has heretofore too clearly manifested the putrid nature of its contents, ought it to be replenished from a place wherein thousands of her subjects daily bathe their limbs? Why should it not be supplied with pure water direct from the Artesian well behind Trafalgar-square, and through the pipes already laid down, to give water to the Palace? The royal children might then safely be allowed to take air in its vicinity, without inhaling those mephitic elements of disease which have hitherto been exhaled from its surface!

An additional supply of water for the Serpentine must be obtained from the Chelsea Waterworks, or from an Artesian well. By a contract, which is now much to be regretted, Government is obliged, for several years to come, to take at least 150,000 tons of water per annum from the Chelsea Company, and about 600,000 tons have been annually obtained from that source. The "dumb waiter" must therefore be allowed, for many years, to throw its contaminated stream into the Serpentine; but it would be far preferable to

* An official personage, high in her Majesty's service, intimated, ten years ago, to the Government, that Buckingham Palace was unhealthy, in a great part on account of the masses of stagnant water by which it is surrounded. I mention this, because some persons may fancy that a "pestilential halo" around this Palace has been introduced to strengthen a case and ennoble a period.

obtain from an Artesian well the additional supply of water, not adulterated—as it is in the Thames—by the perverse ingenuity of man.

It would not be necessary to bore an additional well in the Park for the purpose. The Artesian well, which was made several years since, to supply the fountains of Trafalgar-square, and which now supplies the Horse Guards, the Houses of Parliament, and St. James's and Buckingham Palaces, could be made amply to replenish the Serpentine also, by increasing the power of the steam-engine, and laying down additional pipes. If what we recommend is indispensable to the public health, it must be done *coute qui coute*; but the expense would be trifling. Say, then, as a rough estimate of cost for the improvements we have recommended—

| | |
|---|--------|
| For laying down gravel | £2000 |
| „ coating of concrete | 10,000 |
| „ the additional pipes | 1000 |
| „ increasing the power of the engine | 1000* |

The lowest rate paid to the Chelsea Waterworks Company is £1 6s. 3d. per 1000 tons. We know for certain that it might be supplied from an Artesian well at the low rate of 10s. per 1000 tons. 1,000,000 tons of pure water might be poured into the Serpentine, annually, for about £800, from an Artesian

* The “ Woods and Forests” could spend 12,000*l.* for removing the Quadrant-colonnade—generally considered one of the greatest embellishments of the capital! but when repeatedly urged to abate the Serpentine nuisance, the answer has uniformly been, “ We have no money!”

well; while the same amount of impure water from the Thames would cost upwards of £1,300. This amount of water thrown into the Serpentine from the works in Orange-street, would change the whole quantity in the Serpentine once in three months. It has been advanced by some engineers, that it is *dangerous* (!) to add to the 176 Artesian wells in the metropolis; but it could be easily shown, on the soundest geological principles, that such apprehensions are perfectly groundless.

If the country cannot afford the trifling sum necessary to protect from pestilential influences, not only a large portion of its capital, but the guardians of its liberties and the wielder of its power, then let us be told so once for all. The inhabitants of the suffering districts could raise the sum, and would no doubt supply it as gratuitously, for the improvement of the Crown lands, as we now gratuitously offer our good advice to the stolid advisers of the Sovereign.

We have thus shown how a full supply of the best water can be easily obtained. It must be a question for competent authorities to decide, whether it would not be better to conduct (by pipes) the water to the bridge, or even up to the Bayswater extremity of the Serpentine, so as to give its waters the greatest possible amount of current from west to east; and to increase this current, we have also to suggest that the penstock near the waterfall should be opened for a certain time two or three days in a week. The water would be thus effectually renewed, the "Leg-of-mutton

Pond" would be kept clean, and the Ranelagh sewer would find a drive-water, to the great advantage of the Chelsea pensioners and the sumptuous habitations of some, whose health (and we speak authoritatively) has been deteriorated by the vicinity of this sewer—an uncovered ditch in a considerable portion of its extent.

Perhaps few persons are aware that there is a high-water mark for the Serpentine. Yes; these waters have been so carefully studied, that their stagnation point has been discovered, and, by a kind of parliamentary fiction, called their high-water mark. A man is seen three times a week pensively wending his way to this Serpentine *nilometer*, for fear this stagnation point should be depassed,—for fear the water should run over what was intended to be a waterfall. This, by the way, is not the only *stagnation* point often carefully labelled "High-water mark." As a portion of Hyde Park is in the liberty of Westminster, we need not wonder if we find other similar peculiarities springing from the same soil! It stands to reason, that in spite of prejudice or the deep-rooted customs of the locality, this high-water mark ought to be raised to such a level as will ensure the constant play of the waterfall, and thereby permit the impurities of the water's surface to be drained off.

This purifying of the waters of the Serpentine would have a similar effect on the water of St. James's Canal, that second edition of all the imperfections of the parent stream. It might be supplied with

sufficient water to give it a certain degree of motion.⁷

We might now consider that we had performed our duty, in bringing this nuisance and its remedy in detail before the public; but as it has been admitted, in all ages and in every country, that pleasure-grounds in the immediate vicinity of large towns constitute an essential element of their health, it is also our duty to deprecate, in the strongest terms, the grossly defective police arrangements of the parks. Formerly there were three Bow-street officers on duty on each side of the Serpentine. Our policemen (at least in the parks) are of a more angelic nature; their visits are indeed few and far between; and even when they do appear, it is generally in our most frequented walks, and in our fashionable drives.

Will it be credited, that when thousands are bathing in the Serpentine, there is seldom a policeman to keep order among so motley a crowd; that there are none to prevent the throwing of stones, the stealing of clothes, or the pirating of the Lilliputian men-of-war often stranded on the shore; none to check indecencies of language or behaviour; none to prevent women, forgetful of every feeling of self-respect, from promenading among crowds of naked men. We do not exaggerate, and could bring forward witnesses, if deemed necessary, to prove the fact. The southern shore of the Serpentine is in summer the notorious haunt of a number of vagabonds and

thieves, who, after having committed their depredations on the neighbourhood, find there, what was formerly called *the right* of sanctuary. What passes under the cloak of night our pen cannot describe; suffice it to say, that many who are not afraid of facing danger—dare not at night venture to cross the Park!

The only way of insuring the good police of the Park and of preventing suicides, would be to have a permanent police-station on the southern shore of the Serpentine, and to leave the policemen there long enough to know and frighten away the vagabonds who frequent it.

We have more than once mentioned the Royal Humane Society, and we should have thought, that out of gratitude to a Society whose servants attempt (in so enlightened a manner) to repair the mischievous effects of the treacherous man-traps of the Commissioners of the Woods and Forests—we should have thought that, even if the President of the Board of Health found it absolutely necessary to force them to reside so near his malaria tank, he would at least have taken care that their abode was not afflicted by the bad smells arising from the immediate vicinity of *a piggery*. Or are we to suppose that Lord Carlisle has not read his own *cholera* instructions, wherein he carefully orders that live-stock, and particularly *pigs*, should be far removed from our habitations.

About eighty workmen are employed in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. Thousands daily resort thither; yet will the public believe that there is

no building whereunto it is possible to resort in cases of extreme necessity? In Hyde Park, the receiving-house and the cottage near the favourite spring daily receive numerous applications. At the cottage, the unfortunate pilgrims to Cloacina are shown into a kind of dark cupboard! The woman who serves the well has actually made *seventeen written applications* to the Woods and Forests for permission to erect, *even at her own expense*, a more suitable addendum to her cottage; but her demands have been as often refused.

His lordship's notions of human nature, (guided, perhaps, by mesmeric clairvoyance,) have been heretofore of the most transcendently spiritualized nature. Let us at least indulge in the fond hope, that now, the President of the Board of Health, will re-consider the matter, and adopting the views that *other* medical practitioners have taken of man, will ultimately believe in his twofold nature, and admit, that although he is no doubt endowed with the sublimest of aspirations, he is also tied to his material basis by necessities as imperative as those of the meanest insect he crushes under foot.

It belonged to the profession, on a subject strictly medical, to arouse the public to a lively sense of impending danger, and to awaken the superintending authorities from their soporific trance; so that, from the baneful influences of infection, both the humblest of our fellow-subjects, and the sovereign to whom we give our allegiance, may be alike protected.

It was Apollo, the god of Medicine, who slew the

serpent Python—an allegory of the conversion of a pestiferous region into a place habitable by man. The medical press is the Apollo of our day; our leaders are the shafts with which we strive to subdue the monstrous offspring of Hyde Park, which resembles the old diluvial serpent in nature as well as in name. The father of *Æsculapius* founded the Pythian games to celebrate his triumph over the mythic reptile of antiquity. We also shall indulge in a jubilation, when our remonstrances shall have brought the Commissioners of Woods and Forests to a sense of the duties devolving on them, and shall have tended to confer upon the western part of the metropolis pure air, in conjunction with a safe, salutary, and well-kept national bath. When such a consummation is effected, the President of the Board of Health will be fairly entitled to indulge his well known classic taste by the erection of a statue of Apollo slaying the Python, in the place of the pitiful dumb-waiter, facetiously misnamed a fountain, which now pours its tricklings into the stagnant marsh around; and by such a monument he may appropriately commemorate the re-construction of “the Serpentine as it ought to be.”

THE BOARD OF HEALTH “AS IT IS.”—The foregoing details respecting the great metropolitan nuisance called the Serpentine, sufficiently prove that the Commissioners of the Woods and Forests have been long neglectful of their duty to the public. Such being the case, it was the duty of the Board of Health to indict them under 11 and 12 Vic., c. 63, sec. 58 and 80.s

For if this Board (instituted to improve our most defective sanitary system, and to protect us against cholera) is obliged to order (in its official notifications) the cleansing of cesspools and minor receptacles of filth, why does it allow those large laboratories where similar elements of disease are generated to remain undisturbed in the centre of the metropolis? Is it because these two Boards are related to each other in the person of Lord Carlisle?

This manifest inconsistency in the performance of its duties led me to inquire into the origin of the Board of Health, to consider its constitution, and review the measures it has adopted for the fulfilment of its heavy responsibilities.

The approach of cholera, and the dread of its calamitous infections gave the Board of Health its origin.

Great was the concern of the community on learning, some months since, that a fatal pestilence had again arisen in that region whence we have equally derived our noblest blessings and our severest afflictions. We long since heard of the ravages of cholera in India; we knew that it must inevitably spread, and that however mysterious in its nature, and the manner of its propagation, it would soon vindicate its formidable presence by the number of its victims.

The genius of pestilence advanced with gigantic strides, and when he overshadowed an empire's capital he paused awhile in his westward progress, to let destruction have her fill. Cholera halted at Constan-

tinople and at Smyrna, at Moscow, Cairo, and St. Petersburg; and, spell-bound alike by fear and sickness, they sank for a time in silence under the avenger's rod.

Were not these sufficient warnings of our own prospective danger? We had known of the cholera at its rise, had watched its progress; and at length it approached our shores. A thrill of alarm passed through the whole kingdom, conversation sickened at the name of cholera; and the anxious inquiry was—"What are we to do should the cholera come?"

Unable to obtain from the profession the result of its anxious meditations, the public clung to the first straw that floated before their deluded eyes, pinning their faith to any quack remedy they found in the journals of the day.

The general alarm was not unfelt by Government, and they determined to pass, without farther delay, a Bill for the improvement of our sanitary condition, and for the sweeping away of some of those numerous abuses which deface our country. The Health of Towns Bill also passed the House. How maimed and shorn of those features best calculated to give it practical utility, it boots not here to inquire. For such partial boons we can only accord the qualified gratitude they deserve.

It must, then, be recorded, that in 1848, and on the approach of the cholera, a Government Board was formed on the 29th of August to improve the sanitary condition of the country, and to oppose the approach of

epidemics by the most approved prescriptions of medical science. It will also be chronicled that our Sovereign Lady the Queen was pleased to appoint Lord Morpeth (now the Earl of Carlisle), Lord Ashley, and Mr. Edwin Chadwick, members of this Board. Such are the three guardian angels under whose wings we are to seek a legal refuge from the terrors of cholera. In other countries, sanitary boards are formed of men, to whom health and disease have been the all-engrossing study of life. To go no further than France, the Council of Health is there composed of the celebrated Magendie as its President, and other medical practitioners of eminence and ability. In such countries, highly qualified men, such as Mr. Martin, Dr. Playfair, or Dr. Sutherland, (of Liverpool,) would have been named; but an English ministry would (it seems) decree a Board of Health incompetent to fulfil its duties if it contained one medical name!*

The profession does not ask to be represented in our national assemblies entrusted with the framing of those laws by which men are to be governed, (though such a measure would be advisable, for reasons too obvious to be mentioned.) But it is an insult to the

* Our Gallic neighbours were so unwilling to believe that in England a Board of Health could be composed without medical men that we find a French medical journal, *L'Union Medicale*, announcing that a Board of Health was definitively constituted in England, and that it was composed of Lord Carlisle, Lord Ashley, Mr. E. Chadwick, Dr. S. Smith, Dr. Owen, Dr. Grainger, and Dr. Sutherland; thus mistaking "what ought to be" for "what is."

profession to compose a medical board of two noble-men, who are perfectly innocent of medical information, (though one of them does know something of the mysteries of Mesmerism,) and a lawyer, who (as we have been told) has lately read several medical works. Is the profession brought to so low an ebb that we should be doomed to ask advice, or submit to the decisions, of a man who has only studied nosology and epidemics in Coke and in Blackstone?

The constitution of such a Board will be considered by every reflecting Englishman as an insult to our common sense, that sheet-anchor which alone has preserved our country from the effects of those storms which have shaken every kingdom of Europe from off its hinges of prosperity.

Are we to suppose that our noble legal (but far from medical) health protectors received with *their* nomination, and by a kind of regal *conservation*, a sudden and supernatural intelligence of the multitudinous arcana of medical science—in fact, that they have been transformed into medical ‘seers,’ able by inspiration to take such measures as will reduce our zymotic tables, and avert from our devoted land impending desolation?

That royalty is the source of power, the fountain of justice and of honours, we trust may ever be the political axiom of our country. We know that, during the middle ages, when men gave implicit faith to every substance and even shadow of power, the very touch of royalty was supposed to have the mira-

culous effect of curing the most deep-rooted of all our constitutional infirmities. But it remained for Lord John Russell alone to discover that royalty is also a sacred source from whence to derive a perfect knowledge of all medical science; and that, by virtue of royal prerogative, Lord Carlisle, Lord Ashley, and Mr. Edwin Chadwick, are competent to instruct the age in hygiene, pathology, and therapeutics, or to lecture on those subjects in the first universities of Europe!

We must, however, leave (for the present) this unmedical Board of Health, feeling at a loss what most to wonder at—the absurdity of the Government who named it, or the equally absurd and unconscientious presumption of the thoughtless men who ventured to accept so responsible a trust. We shall leave this benighted triumvirate to the vacillations of their acknowledged ignorance. Condemned to beg advice of those with whom they are too proud to associate, let them, in a bewilderment of their own seeking, be tossed to and fro by conflicting advice they cannot understand! The public is to be their victim, and we must look on, and await with patience, errors and faults, the natural offspring of ignorance and presumption.*

Our previsions have been too soon fulfilled; for the first step of the Board on entering office, was to give the British public an official notification of their extreme unfitness for the duties they assumed. They

* LANCET of October 14, 1848.

gravely advised us to abstain from *vegetables* and *fruits*, whether taken in that state given to us by God, or whether rendered more easily digestible by culinary processes—whether *dried* or *preserved*. In contravention of the most elementary notions of physiology, they attempted to reverse the designs of Providence, which makes man omnivorous; and told him to live almost exclusively on meat and cereals!

We had heard of law-givers ordering an exclusively vegetable diet, and know that millions of our fellow-subjects carry out these precepts. We have even heard of a Vegetarian Society vegetating near Ramsgate, in the harmless hope of making us promise not to eat flesh; but we could not have supposed that our three medical soothsayers (forgetting that we are neither Hottentots, nor Caffirs, nor Esquimaux) would have promulgated this wholesale proscription of the fruits of the earth.

If, from some peculiarly absurd crotchet of their own, they had considered it their duty to enforce so strenuously the carnivorous propensities of man, we should have thought that, before giving official utterance to a recommendation so strange, so contrary to the nature and habits of civilized man, so ruinous to the interests of thousands of the community—we should have thought that a Board composed only of two noblemen and a lawyer, would have at least obtained for their novel theories the sanction of some *legally* qualified medical body. But no!—with the greatest composure imaginable, they decreed in the

first of their long and ill-digested proclamations, that vegetables and fruit, whether ripe or sour, cooked or in their natural condition, were things pernicious while we were within the sphere of the choleraic poison: a decree unwarranted by the wording of the Act of Parliament, and as absurd in a medical point of view as it was cruelly heartless in its evident natural bearings on those who raise vegetables—those who sell them, and *the millions who almost only live on the very articles of food thus anathematized.*⁹

The public is not sufficiently aware of the result attending the irrational instructions of the Board of Health. Vegetables and fruit were for several weeks left to rot in the fruiterers shops. Fruit and vegetable venders were obliged to write to the farmers in the country “*to keep back their supplies till the mania had passed.*” Such were the expressions made use of by several of them.

The Board of Health, however, felt the awkwardness of its position, and its members determined to shelter their responsibility under the cloak of a medical name.

In the *Gazette* of Friday, October 6th, we read—

“ Whitehall, October 5th.

“ The Queen has been pleased to appoint Thomas Southwood Smith, M.D., to be the medical member of the General Board of Health.”

Dr. Southwood Smith is not made a member of the Board of Health, but *the medical member*, to sit at the Board only on certain occasions, as during the prevalence of cholera. He is not received on a foot-

ing of equality, but as a medical attaché, to do for the non-medical members of that Board the medical work of which they are incapable.

The College of Physicians, worthily represented by its president, Dr. Paris, wrote on the 12th of October to Sir George Grey, remonstrating with him, in strong terms, on this and other medical heresies of the Board of Health; but although the profession and the public were in the hourly expectation of a visitation of cholera of the most serious character, no answer was vouchsafed to this letter until the 18th instant. Then came a cold official reply from the secretary of Sir George Grey. But on the 17th of October, the learned President received a letter from Lord Carlisle, which letter, we trust, will soon be published. In this curious production, (we have it from good authority,) the President of the Board of Health assures Dr. Paris that he is "new in office," and unaccustomed to the business, and that the Board of Health was a "Board of Works." Such is the notion the President of the Board of Health entertains of his important office, while the country is actually suffering from the ravages of cholera. It is, then, a "Board of Works" which, with one stroke of its secretary's pen, tends to deprive the rich of half their *necessary food*, and the poor of their *only sustenance*. It is a "Board of Works" which gives medical advice, dabbles in prescriptions, and orders a wholesale exhibition of opiates without medical sanction, on the occurrence of disease; thus encouraging quackery in its worst form. In consequence of advice, if not illegal, at least

not sanctioned by any Act of Parliament, our chemists' shops are full of deluded customers asking for "cholera powders and cholera mixtures," as they would for Holloway's or Morison's pills, or the *infanticidal nostrums* of Daffy and Dalby. All this was done even before a medical member was attached pro tem. to this non-medical Board of Health.*

Suppose we here present our readers with the following parallel cholera instructions:—

Advice given by the Board of Health, Oct. 5, 1848.

Next in importance to the immediate employment of such remedies, is attention to proper diet and clothing. Whenever Asiatic cholera is epidemic, there is invariably found among great numbers of the inhabitants an extraordinary tendency to irritation of the bowels; and this fact suggests, that every article of food which is known to favour a relaxed state of the bowels should, as far as possible, be avoided—such as every variety of green vegetables, whether cooked or not, as cabbage, cucumber, and salad. It will be important also to abstain from fruit of all kinds, though ripe and even cooked, and whether dried or preserved. The most wholesome

Advice given by the Royal College of Physicians, Oct. 28, 1848.

The committee do not recommend that the public should abstain from the moderate use of well-cooked green vegetables, and of ripe or preserved fruits. A certain proportion of these articles of diet is, with most persons, necessary for the maintenance of health; and there is reason to fear that, if they be generally abstained from, now that the potato crop has in great measure failed, many persons, especially amongst the poor in large towns, will fall into that ill-condition which in its highest degree is known as scurvy, and that they will in consequence be the readier victims of cholera. The committee likewise think it not advisable to pro-

* Lord Carlisle was clearly *estopped* by his cholera prescription from setting up as an excuse that the Board was a Board of *Works*.

articles of vegetable diet are— well baked, but not new bread, rice, oatmeal, and good potatoes. Pickles should be avoided. Articles of food and drink, which in ordinary seasons are generally wholesome, and agree well with the individual constitution, may, under this unusual condition, prove highly dangerous. The diet should be solid rather than fluid; and those who have the means of choosing should live principally on animal food, as affording the most concentrated and invigorating diet; avoiding salted and smoked meats, pork, salted and shellfish, cider, perry, ginger-beer, lemonade, acid liquors of all descriptions, and ardent spirits.

hibit the use of pork or bacon, or of salted, dried, or smoked meat or fish, which have not been proved to exert any direct influence in causing this disease. Nothing promotes the spread of epidemic diseases so much as want of nourishment, and the poor will necessarily suffer this want if they are led to abstain from those articles of food on which, from their comparative cheapness, they mainly depend for subsistence.

On the whole, the committee advise persons living in districts in which cholera prevails, to adhere to that plan of diet which they have generally found to agree with them, avoiding merely such articles of food as experience may have taught them to be likely to disorder the stomach and bowels.

Lord Carlisle also said, in his letter to Dr. Paris, that he had not had time to consult with the College of Physicians, but that he had taken the advice of certain medical men, whose names would be a sufficient guarantee for the instructions of the Board. For the credit of the profession, we shall not ask his lordship for the names of the doctors, who are not aware that the regimen they prescribe is one likely to produce, in some individuals, the very disorders sought to be prevented, and to bring on in others habitual constipation and its subsequent evils. Instead of

advising with certain anonymous gentlemen, it would not have given Lord Carlisle more trouble to have consulted with the venerable President of the College of Physicians and other well-known members of that learned body, (which really we should have thought the course to be naturally resorted to on such an occasion)

To the honour of the profession, we are happy to state that, to the strange epistle of Lord Carlisle, Dr. Paris sent a reply, (which, unfortunately, like the preceding, has not yet been made public,) highly praiseworthy, for the tone and spirit in which it was dictated. The *majority* of the committee of the College of Physicians *did not think it advisable that this correspondence should be published*; but our medical brethren will rejoice to hear that their official head, the President of the College of Physicians, did not fail to support the dignity of the profession, and that in the committee were found *three* men—Dr. James Arthur Wilson, Dr. Mayo, and Dr. Roupell—who desired, by the immediate publication of these important documents, to wipe off an affront so gratuitously offered to the medical faculty.

What has the medical profession done to draw down upon it the contemptuous neglect of those in office?

If, as students, we should be looked down upon, it need not surprise us—the many must suffer for the faults of the few.

That while serving our country on board her Majesty's ships, we should be considered as something below mates and engineers, and sent down to the

cockpit to philosophize with uproarious youngsters, we can understand. The Lords of the Admiralty say that the abasement of the profession is so *necessary for the discipline* of the ship, that we *for a time* must submit!

That while wasting our best energies in the service of the poor, gentlemen as we are, at least by education and position, we should be often treated like menials, and worse paid than butlers in respectable families,—to this also we submit. At any price one must give bread to his wife and children, and, of course, patiently submit to the hard and unfair conditions of those who administer laws, in themselves most unjust to the profession and the poor.

Even if, by dint of hard struggles, intense application, and the sacrifice of health, in the conscientious fulfilment of our duties to the public, we attain to the greatest eminence in our profession, what reward do we obtain? A peerage!—no; that proud honour is given, for a time, to the passive respectability of the lawn; or it may be given, for ever, as a reward for the turnings and twistings of language, and sometimes of conscience; but to corporation mouthpieces and to physicians is allotted the pale honour of knighthood,—except that, sometimes, we are made baronets, when wanted about court. But do we complain of being thus debarred from superior rank? We know that we do not receive from society a reward commensurate with the benefits conferred on it by our noble avocations; still of this we

do not complain. But when, with airs of great importance, certain busy-bodies invade the very ground on which we stand, encroach on our proper sphere of acknowledged usefulness, insult us first, and then throw on medical science the discredit resulting from their own absurd conduct—ah! then, indeed, we do complain; and we will not cease to do so until we have regained that honourable supremacy *in medical affairs* which is our acknowledged right.

Who thinks of sending to the cobbler when he wants his coat mended, or his shoes to the tailor? And even when pestilence is encircling us, is the health of the public to be mended, our sanitary system to be improved, by others than by doctors?

How singular the constitution of the Board of Health appears in the following parallel, extracted from an able article which recently appeared on the subject:—

“A Board of Health is appointed, from the constitution of which it might be supposed that the cholera is to be expelled from the country by law—physic being thrown to the dogs.

“If it were proposed to institute an inquiry into the state of the law with a view of relieving the public from the danger of imposition, and if for this purpose a committee of Physicians were to be appointed, under the title of a Legal Board, some persons might call in question the rationality of the proceeding. Others might argue that the

“It was thought necessary, in anticipation of a mysterious and fatal epidemic, to institute an inquiry with a view of protecting the public from the danger of infection, and for this purpose a committee of Legislators has been appointed under the title of a Board of Health. These gentlemen have had no medical education, but they may obtain information

Physicians, although unacquainted with law themselves, might obtain information from others more conversant with the subject.

“In case of need, a Legal Practitioner might be added as a supplementary appendage, to be consulted occasionally.

“The Lawyers might probably be dissatisfied with such an arrangement, and they might be told, that as they had not taken the initiative by introducing the needful reforms into their profession, it had been found expedient to call in the doctors.”*

from others more conversant with the subject. In case of need, a Medical Practitioner, Dr. Southwood Smith, has been appointed as an appendage to the Board, to be consulted occasionally.

“The Physicians are probably dissatisfied with this arrangement; but they may be told, that as the College did not take the initiative by appointing a committee of inquiry into this important medical subject, it has been found expedient to call in the lawyers.”

We have laws to punish those who practise physic without due qualification; and because, forsooth, the cholera has come, are we to have three gentlemanly quacks sitting round a Board of Health at Gwydyr House? We were right in prophesying of such a Board a concatenation of absurdities sufficient to cover their names with immeasurable ridicule.

For what has the Board of Health done since the publication of its first manifesto? It has brought forth, for the good of the people, long official documents wherein idle tales and extracts from medical works have been strung together. These extracts are useless both to the profession, who have read them in their proper places, and to the people, who cannot understand them

* *Pharmaceutical Journal*, &c. Edited by Jacob Bell. November 1st, 1848.

when read. When the Board has ventured an opinion of its own, the College of Physicians has contradicted it, and obliged it to eat its own words, and to stultify in its subsequent cholera-sermons the opinions expressed in its first. Thus, cholera hospitals, declared in the first notification of the Board to be unsuccessful, are in the following *ordered to be got* ready! If not contradicted by others—*par qui de droit*—the members of the Board have taken good care to contradict themselves. “They tell us cholera is non-contagious in the common sense of the word,” and in another place “that cholera is catching in ill-ventilated and ill-conditioned places,”—as if typhus did not disappear from the hovel when it is well aired and freely ventilated—as if the most strenuous supporters of the doctrines of contagion could say more. They have issued laborious directions for the cleansing of every dirty corner in the island, but without saying *who were to pay for it*; and they did *not* issue *any* instructions *until* guardians of the poor and magistrates were thrown into a state of great amazement, and the public press had noted the omission.

The Board have placed an increased amount of drudgery on the shoulders of the profession, kindly recommending, *but not enforcing*, adequate pecuniary remuneration for all the inspecting of roads, of dirty alleys, and of public nuisances in general, by the burden-bearing union doctor. As if Mr. E. Chadwick, so long secretary to the Three Kings of Somerset House, was not aware, from his intimate connexion with Poor Law Guardians, that the profession could

stand no chance of a proper remuneration of its services if it were left to the discretion of those persons. When the question of remuneration is mooted, the General Board of Health turn us over to the Poor-Law Board; the Poor-Law Board, to the Guardians; the Guardians, to the Magistrates; and the Magistrates say, "We have no power to pay the fee, as the case is withdrawn by the parish officers." The nuisance having been removed, all the parties are satisfied, except the union doctor—thus made the *Dindon de la farce*.

To give the public an idea of the deep humiliation and degradation to the profession, resulting from our being made the servants of uncontrolled Poor-law Guardians, we can state what occurred lately in the Sister island at the *Baillieborough Union*,¹⁰ "*ex uno disce omnes*." When it was a question of remunerating the Union doctor for the duties of the cholera hospital, attached to the Baillieborough Union, one of these sapient gentlemen, in the plenitude of his liberality, was of opinion that one shilling a-day was an adequate remuneration for his services. It was finally fixed at two shillings and twopence a-day, or thereabouts. The Board of Health, however, refused to sanction the short-sighted parsimony of these most economical guardians, or to grant their approval to any salary below five shillings a day, and so the matter stands.*

In this momentous crisis it was gratifying to

* Letter of Mr. Hans Fleming, medical officer of the Baillieborough Union, to the editor of the *Dublin Medical Press*, November 22, 1848.

both the public and the profession to see the College of Physicians place itself between the Board of Health and the people. Let us hope that the College will remember that it has been for centuries the worthy impersonation of medical science, medical honour, and medical fame; and that, following up its first noble impulse, and pursuing the advantage it has already obtained, it may regain its antique supremacy in medical matters, and obtain the proper superintendence of all that is connected with the health of the country as well as the admission of practitioners into the ranks of the profession. By so doing it will save the honour of the medical body, which instinctively looks up to it as to a leader it wishes to venerate. It will do more;—it will protect from the erroneous advice of misguided men the people who look to it for protection* when their health is at stake.

Give unto the profession this just supremacy in the medical affairs of the country.

Let the nobility bask in the sunshine of their well-merited honours, or even in the enjoyment of that more problematic *éclat* derived from ancestral fame.

Let lawyers enjoy the consideration they deserve, and reap those high honours to which they so often

* This is literally true; and those who pass Covent Garden, will see in one of the shops the cholera instructions of the College of Physicians, got up in the form of a large placard, wherein the two vegetarian paragraphs stand out from the rest of the instructions in the bold relief of very large letters.

attain. Let them make laws and statutes, and—explain them! But in *our own sphere*, let *us* be also supreme. Our dangers are fully as great as those the soldier fronts on any battle field. The drudgery we have to undergo in the daily performance of our duties beggars description. God only knows the secret of our anxieties, and still we only ask to be allowed equal possession of the *humble honours* of a profession, the awful responsibilities of which none may dispute.

THE BOARD OF HEALTH AS “IT OUGHT TO BE.”—What has occurred during the last few weeks will not, we hope, be entirely lost upon her Majesty’s Ministers, and that, as much for the welfare of the community as to prevent future collision between the profession and any of her Majesty’s servants, Ministers will see the necessity of placing *medical men* on *medical boards*. We trust they will do more, and seriously investigate the cause of recent occurrences. They will then see the necessity of establishing a MEDICAL COURT OF ADVICE which they may consult with confidence in all matters connected with the sanitary state of the country. This medical court of advice should give to the country the highest possible guarantees.

1. It must be composed of the most respectable members of the profession.

2. It must be numerous enough to give to its *public* discussions the greatest weight.

3. It must be independent. It should meet weekly to discuss publicly the numerous questions on medical

subjects referred to it by Government. Its solution would thus embody the most enlightened opinions of the profession.

Government would then have *its own board* of medical men to advise with in ordinary cases, or in cases of great emergency; and in all other cases of interest to the community, it would benefit by the decisions of a public body representing the whole of the profession.

The experience of a neighbouring country proves that this plan is susceptible of working well. The Académie de Médecine of France was expressly founded, in 1820, to be the great sanitary council of government, and to answer all questions respecting epidemics, epizootics, medical jurisprudence, vaccination, new remedies, secret remedies, and mineral waters.

Since then, the French Minister of the Interior has been in constant communication with this body, seeking and obtaining information which enables him to meet medical emergencies in the best manner.

Our own government has of late painfully felt the want of such an Institution, having been the laughing-stock of Europe for establishing a cholera-quarantine one day and taking it off the next!¹⁰

No public body would be better calculated to perform the duties, and accept the responsibilities of such a council, than the College of Physicians, to which they would impart fresh life and additional importance. The adoption of such a measure would relieve Ministers from many an anxiety, and would give greater confidence to the public in seasons of epidemic visitations,

and to the profession its proper importance, by making it the medical adviser of the community as it is the medical attendant of each individual. Should the College of Physicians decline accepting the responsibilities of this high office, the Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society—a chartered body, which has been often called the “parliament of the profession”—is worthy of the honour, and would be found well calculated to carry out the plan suggested. Indeed, this Society would, in the eyes of many, be considered the more appropriate of the two, as a sanitary council, because it embodies the *whole profession* represented by the *physicians*, the *surgeons*, and the *general practitioners*, who are alike fellows of this celebrated Society.

Now is the proper moment for making so necessary an innovation, for the medical profession is on the verge of its reorganization. A Bill for Medical Reform has at length passed through its multitudinous elaborations, and, as we learn, will be presented to Parliament early in next session. It is sincerely to be hoped that, after conference with the College of Physicians or the Medico-Chirurgical Society, respecting the minor details of the plan suggested, provisions for a supreme court of medical advice will be embodied in the forthcoming Bill, and thus in future give to the public the best guarantee for the proper decision of all medical questions.

I am prompted at the present time to trespass on public attention, by a desire to uphold the honour of the profession to which I belong; but I would have

remained silent, if others much more capable than myself had thought proper to bring these matters before the public. If in my strictures I am sometimes severe on the members of the Board of Health, it is not from any personal disrespect towards them;—I know them not;—but I am fully aware that, as individuals, they are amiable and honourable men. I shall even admit, in extenuation of their faults, that they are labouring under a species of delusion too common to men in office,—that of supposing that they are able to assume any amount of labour, and that they are equally fitted to conscientiously hold all kinds of official appointments,—and that has hitherto blinded them to the sense of their serious responsibilities.*

We even willingly admit that Mr. Edwin Chadwick, who lately has devoted so much time to sanitary questions, would be, under all circumstances, a valuable member of a Board of Health, provided he held exactly the position which has been *conceded* to the medical profession in the present Board of Health. As Dr. Southwood Smith is now *the medical member*

* This species of hallucination, which often affects men in office, has not been mentioned in the learned works on Insanity, by Esquirol, or by my friend, Dr. J. Conolly, but has been forcibly described by a late pious canon of St. Paul, in alluding to the case of an illustrious personage.

“There is not a better man in England than Lord John Russell; but his worst failure is, that he is utterly *ignorant of all moral fear*; there is nothing he would not undertake. I believe he would perform the operation for the stone—build St. Peter’s—or assume (with or without ten minutes’ notice) the command of the Channel Fleet; and no one would discover by his manner that the patient had died—the church tumbled down—and the Channel Fleet been knocked to atoms.”—*Second Letter of the Rev. Sidney Smith to Archdeacon Singleton.*

of a Board composed of three non-medical men, so Mr. Edwin Chadwick should be *the legal member* of a Board composed of three medical men.

Under medical guidance, Mr. Edwin Chadwick's technical knowledge and long experience of sanitary measures would, no doubt, greatly redound to the welfare of the public.

If the Board of Health had really been only a "Board of Works," it would have little signified who were its members; but against their wholesale drugging of the people, and prospective poisoning of our infants, we must issue an energetic protest. *Salus populi suprema lex.* Would it not be prudent for the members of this Board of Health to retire before cholera has made more serious ravages, and before they are driven from office by the clamours of an outraged people? Having their real position placed fully before them, would it not be wise in them *at once* to resign? For if, without having had any serious difficulties to cope with, the tenour of their course has been uniformly marked by absurdity, inconsistency, and vacillation, what could the country expect from such a Board if, as in 1832, after a few months of lull, cholera should again break out amongst us with increased intensity?* Supposing Providence, in its inscrutable designs should doom us to such an infliction as visited Paris in that memorable year, when

* *The Times* of the 28th inst. informs us, that since the commencement of November, the Cholera had reappeared at St. Petersburg, where it rages at present with more intensity than in July last.

for a time *three thousand victims* were numbered daily in the French capital: the Board of Health would then, but on a larger scale, prolong the chain of its muddled and ill-digested measures, or else, panic-struck, vanish from Gwydir House, leaving the country to work out its own safety.

Since this pamphlet was in type the following paragraph has appeared in the *Times* of Nov. 24:—

“*Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers.*—A Court of the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers was held yesterday at the Sewers’-office, Greek-street, Soho, the Earl of Carlisle, Chief Commissioner, in the chair. A communication was read from the General Board of Health, calling upon the Court to consider a recommendation made by the General Purposes Committee that they should contribute a moiety of the sum of 300*l.* towards diverting the sewerage water ‘from that part of the Ranelagh sewer known as the Serpentine River.’ The communication set forth that it was desirable that the alteration should be carried immediately into effect, for the purpose of promoting the sanitary state of the neighbourhood, and the removal of fever. The recommendation was unanimously agreed to.”

We shall welcome with pleasure an *instalment* of Sanitary Reform for the West-end of the metropolis, and trust it will be speedily followed by more “*heroic*” measures, which can only be applied during the winter season.

APPENDIX.

Note 1, p. 6.—On the Fish of the Serpentine.

IN a letter which appeared in the *Times* of October the 30th, signed Euexia, the writer, judging of the amount of fish in the Serpentine from the few caught by the patient piscatory tribe, who point, every Sunday morning, their long sticks into the water, sagaciously concludes that the fish in the Serpentine are both scarce and imperishable.

The park-keeper who has the care of the fish, and drags with a net to supply the tables of the Royal family; the superintendent of the Royal Humane Society, who sees him fish; and a waterman named Griffiths, who has been all his life connected with the Serpentine, severally report that that water contains a great abundauce of fish. Are they to be disbelieved because it pleases a passer-by to make an assertion neither founded on personal experience nor that of others?

The three persons I have mentioned can state that when—a few years since—the Kensington portion of the Serpentine was emptied and cleaned, the eels were so abundant that their muddy habitation literally swarmed with them. The man Griffith says, that he helped to put back many of them into the water on the other side of the bridge, and saw the rest carted away in great numbers. Yet Euexia asserts that there is not so much fish in the Serpentine as would fill a costermouger's donkey-cart! The great erroneusness of one assertion may lead us to infer the absurdity of others contained in the same letter.

“Ex uno disce omnes.”

The waterman asserts that there are plenty of carp and bream in the water, a great number of roach, and an immense quantity of eels. Ten or fifteen feet of mud would no doubt be considered a favourable breeding-place for these animals by any other than Euexia. The eels are noted for their size and flavour; and are even often poached at night. Euexia has, moreover, ascertained that only one fish died last summer in the Serpentine. He knew him well—he perhaps saw him die, and was called in to attend an

soothe the dying moments of this solitary representative of the finny tribes.

We must suppose that the doctor is too prudent to bathe, and has therefore lost the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the remains of what other fish departed this life last summer in the Serpentine.

Note 2, p. 7.—On Confervæ.

Lindley (*Vegetable Kingdom*, p. 14) indicates Confervas as “*vesicular, filamentary, or membranous bodies, multiplied by zoospores generated in the interior.*” He describes them as “water plants, occasionally olive, violet, and red, more commonly found in fresh water; some found in mud, others floating freely, most attached, in some way, on rocks, or as parasites.” In his previous remarks on Algæ, (to which department they belong,) he observes, “It is here that the transition from animals to plants, whatever its true nature may be, occurs; for it is incontestable, as the varying statements of original observers testify, that no man can certainly say whether many of the organic bodies placed here belong to the one kingdom of nature or the other.” “It is curious,” he further remarks, “to see how much (the Confervæ), at one period at least of their existence, they have of an animal nature, if the power of moving from place to place is to be taken as an indication of such equality.” Their mode of reproduction by sporules is highly analogous to what takes place in the lowest forms of the animal kingdom.



Confervæ, as seen in a drop of the Serpentine water with a microscope of 400 diameter.

Note 3, p. 8.—“ To the Editor of the Times.

“ SIR,—I hope, in justice to this neighbourhood, that you will allow me a few lines on the Serpentine. If all that is said about this pond be true, a man might as well settle at once on the banks of the Gambia. To breathe its vapours and escape pestilence must be miraculous. You lately copied from a medical journal an emanation from some author's brain, and dignified it by a notice in your leader. What a fearful *compôt* of putrefying matters! What a focus of corruption! What a Pandora's box! But, really, this is all romance. I live hard by these waters, walk about them daily, and, being a doctor, have an eye to the sources of disease. Animal and vegetable effluvia! dead fish and rotten conservæ! Why there is not as much fish in the whole pond (many a patient piscatory soul can testify) as would fill a costermonger's donkey-cart; and as for dead fish, there was only one to be seen on its surface all this summer. Now, really, a man might as well pretend that a dead rat stretched in Piccadilly would infect the parish of St. James, or that we should suffer from the sudden decay of the two innocent-looking *pisces* in the zodiac. As for the vegetables, if we object to their decay, we had better at once make a clean thing of the Gardens, for more decaying leaves are shed in them every fall than there are drops of water in the Serpentine. Sulphuretted hydrogen, too! You create more every time you eat an egg for breakfast, as your blackened spoon can testify, than any chemist could find in a day's search about the Serpentine. Be assured, that whatever disease is to be got out of this water is to be found beneath its surface, and not above it: its banks are hard and dry, and its bed covered; that *nescio quid* which laughs at doctors and withers generations, does not emanate from the flowing waters, but from the rich swamps and the teeming morasses of the Orinoco and the Niger; ay, and from the muddy banks of the Thames, when the receding tide has left them bared to the sun. It is from such moist, heated masses of corruption that pestilential fever springs. Far be it from me to defend mud and duck ponds; I would rejoice if your efforts could make the waters under us and the air above us clear as a Parisian sky. My only wish is here to allay the misgivings which your paper has created in the anxious mother's breast when she despatches her little brood of a morning to feed the ducks in the Serpentine.”

“ Your obedient servant,

“ Paddington, Oct. 27.”

“ EUEXIA.

The notes on the Fish in the Serpentine, and Malaria, and also the *analysis* of the fearful *compôt*, will amply answer certain portions

of the preceding letter : we will merely make a few observations on some of Euexia's peculiar notions.

He seems to think the Serpentine innocuous because its banks are hard and dry. Is poison not poison when put in a "hard and dry" cup? Euexia has shown us that he does not distinctly see, taste, nor smell foul water; we are almost tempted to believe that he does not perfectly understand what he reads, for he fancies that disease has been attributed to the mere decay of leaves on the ground, because it has been stated that the great masses of weeds and leaves which rot in the Serpentine, mixed up with the soil from the sewers, forms indeed a fearful *compôt* of putrefying matter.

Euexia's only wish "that mothers should still be allowed to dispatch their brood to feed the ducks in the Serpentine," is, in other words, advising mothers to prepare food for their doctors. In fact, Euexia does tell us that he is a doctor, and "lives hard by," and "has an eye to the sources of disease;" and even admits with me, that its elements are to be found beneath the water.

I should very much like to know, how from ten to fifteen feet of putrid mud can remain beneath water (in a great extent not eighteen inches deep) without contaminating it, and causing it to exhale from its surface the noxious gases it generates. Why, to deny this would be almost as absurd as to say that we create sulphuretted hydrogen every time we eat a fresh egg at breakfast, (even though our silver spoon be blackened for a time.) Oh! Chemistry, are thy laws to be so soon forgotten, and by a doctor too?

I shall conclude by suggesting to Euexia, that if he be a doctor, and "lives hard by;" if he "has an eye to the sources of disease," and has discovered so potent a source "beneath the surface of the water,"—that instead of advising mothers to send their children to inhale the mephitic exhalations of the Serpentine, he had better follow the example of so many other doctors, and forbid his patients to walk near that lake until the Commissioners of Woods and Forests have cleansed it of its long accumulated abominations.

Note 4, p. 11.—On Malaria.

That "*nescio quid* which laughs at doctors and withers generations," is perceptible only by its effects. No cunning chemist has been able to present it, in a tangible form, to any of our senses. *It is*, but we know not *how it is*, and only see it in its effects. There is a law of nature that whenever that which has lived passes into its

components, there should arise an unseen, perhaps unsmelt, effluvium, which harms not vegetable bodies, but which exerts a baneful influence on higher receptacles of vitality, and most on man. Whenever vegetable or animal matter undergoes putrid decomposition on the banks of rivers, in stagnant ponds, in ditches, under the limber boards of vessels, in uncovered sewers, in cesspools or privies, a somewhat similar, though not identical agent of fatality arises, producing similar, though not identical diseases—diseases of an adynamic or debilitating character. And even when not positively suffering from disease, the populations or the individuals exposed to such influences, show, by the withered frame, the pallid, sickly hue, that some poison is secretly corroding their vital energies. When disease occurs in the vicinity of these infected spots, it generally assumes a peculiar character—it is adynamic. When typhus appears, it rages with fearful intensity. When, by a dispensation of Divine Omnipotence, a special poison, travelling on the wings of the winds, visits our shores, it reacts with most fearful energy in the vicinity of these fated spots; and this holds good alike in India, in Europe, and on the Gulf of Mexico.

It does certainly appear that, by some secret affinity of action, the miasmata thrown off from the contents of sewers do act as a specific poison on the nervous system of our vegetating frame, and on the intestinal mucous membrane so intimately connected with the ganglionic nerves; consequently, those who breathe such emanations are most liable to be suddenly affected by the choleraic poison. Thus many of the cases of cholera reported by the Registrar General may be traced to a residence in the midst of air impregnated with noxious gases, to the vicinity of sewers and cesspools in high putrid action, to the offensive vapours arising from the bilge water, in vessels, from the vicinity of the openings of common sewers, as in the convict *Justitia* hulk, and of those vessels in the Liverpool Docks, of which Dr. Ryan speaks, in his Lectures on Sanitary Improvements, at the Polytechnic Institution.

No doubt there may be exceptions to this general rule; persons may be met with so strongly constituted, that with the enjoyment of perfect health they may live in the midst of the plague-spots of the land. As in the parable of the Sower, in some the seeds of poison are not received—they pass off; in others, the seeds of poison are received into the blood, but do not find that living soil disposed for their effectual germination, and produce no effects.

Faithful to the natural instincts implanted in us, we are prompted speedily to remove from us that which has *lived*, and in its own decay tends to the destruction of life in other organized bodies.

Reason confirms the dictates of instinct, and logic asserts that it is absurd to order the removal of cesspools, if "*large malaria tanks*" are permitted to infect our vital pabulum.

Note 5, p. 14.—On Bathing in the Jordan.

The Paschal Tuesday of the Greek calendar occurs in the week following our (the Latin) Easter Tuesday. The Greek church holds that on that day our Saviour was baptized in the Jordan; and on the previous Monday, those who profess the faith of that church in Jerusalem, the numerous Greek pilgrims congregated in the holy city from far distant countries,—from Greece, and from Russia,—leave Jerusalem under a strong escort of Turkish soldiers, to go on pilgrimage to the Jordan. The whole caravan encamps and sleeps at Jericho. Omitting the events of the journey and the details of our encampment, I find that "At three in the morning we struck our tents and started for the Jordan. The full moon was waning and the morning star rising beyond the mountains on the other side of the Jordan. It was so large that I thought at first it was an Eastern bonfire, or some artificial light kindled on the mountain, but its blue electric splendour soon convinced me of its sidereal nature. As it rested on the mountain top, a thing of light, of life, and glory, I could not withdraw my eyes from its fascinating glance; and while slowly wandering through a plain covered with copse, and lit up by wood-fires, kindled to show the pilgrims their path, I could not help allowing my imagination to travel railway speed, musing on the mysterious pilgrim-orbs which wander above our heads, in the boundless regions of space.

"I was soon, however, brought down to the level of reality, for we had arrived at the Jordan; and there was before me a scene of great confusion: men, women, and children were leaving their camels, and horses, and donkeys, anxiously striving to obtain a first view of the river.

"At the particular spot where it is believed our Saviour was baptized, the Jordan is about fifty yards wide, yellow and turbid; but its waters are very soft, because remarkably free from saline deposit. (Temp. 75° Fahrenheit.) The banks are high and perpendicular, fringed with luxuriant vegetation, the far-famed Euphrates' poplars rising conspicuously in view. At the foot of one of the banks is a strand so shelved that the water was shallow, affording a convenient bathing spot.

"On this strand hundreds of people were huddled together, each making his preparations to dip into the stream, without seem-

ing in the slightest conscious of the surrounding crowd. There was, of course, much taking off and putting-on of clothes by both men and women; and it was evident that some religious feeling threw its sanction over the whole performance, for nothing occurred to wound in the least even our European notions of propriety. Most of the pilgrims put on a species of nightgown, but some men were seen entering the river in that state of independence of all terrestrial costume in which we are all first ushered into a world of much dressing and undressing.

“Neither were the charities of life forgotten on the banks of the Jordan. Mothers were bathing their children, evidently thinking to confer on them more than bodily cleanliness. Girls were supporting the tottering frame of an aged parent. I saw a man carrying in his arms the withered framework of a wife, in the hopes of finding that regenerating influence of the pool of Bethesda in the soft waters of this holy stream. Those who could not bathe, dipped at least their clothes in the water, to be carefully preserved, as a winding-sheet for their corpse to be shrouded in; as if the immortal soul could acquire some purifying influence if the companion of its woes, the complice of its sinfulness, was wrapped in some fond memento of baptismal regeneration. Others dipped their staves in the water to take to the friends they had left at home.

“But while this strange, busy scene was passing on one side of the river, I saw a man swimming on the other side, where the current is very rapid. He was drifting fast, and struggling with useless energy against the current. Not a cry escaped his lips, and down he went! but soon he re-appeared. Again he sank; I looked in vain with breathless anxiety, but he rose no more.

“The following day the body was found. It was that of a Greek pilgrim, and he had come all the way from Naxos. I had been gazing upon this terrible event with European sympathy, but the event threw not the slightest damp over the crowd. Some looked on for a moment with careless eye, but no attempt was made to save the dying man. These inhabitants of the East,—Greeks, Arabs, Copts, and Armenians, call themselves Christians; but the spirit of Turkish fatalism is the mainspring of their conduct. They are Turks in spirit if not in creed, and *Allah Kerim* may be their motto as well as that of their oppressors.

“Oh! for a touch of that generous spirit of self devotion, which in our native land prompts so many to risk their lives in the fond hope of saving the lives of others. Oh! for that heroic spirit of self sacrifice which was even felt by a pagan Decius and a Curtius; and has, in our Western clime, its daily heroes and its numerous martyrs. This is the secret of European strength, the *ratio sufficiens*

of European civilization, and the best proof of the superiority of our faith. Such were my impressions when (after bathing, as I always make a point of doing in all waters hallowed by historical recollection) I left the Jordan and rode over the salted sand, on my way to the Dead Sea."—Extract from my unpublished "Journal of Travels in Italy, Greece, and Palestine."
E. J. T.

Note 6, p. 15.

The following Tables have been most obligingly forwarded to me by Mr. Charlier, the zealous Secretary of the Royal Humane Society:—

NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS TO BATHERS IN THE SERPENTINE RIVER,
AND NUMBER OF ATTEMPTED SUICIDES RESCUED DURING THE
LAST TEN YEARS.

| <i>Accidents to Bathers.</i> | | <i>Attempted Suicides.</i> | |
|------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|-------|
| Year 1838, | No. 27 | Year 1838, | No. 9 |
| " 1839, | " 18 | " 1839, | " 21 |
| " 1840, | " 21 | " 1840, | " 13 |
| " 1841, | " 14 | " 1841, | " 7 |
| " 1842, | " 22 | " 1842, | " 7 |
| " 1843, | " 14 | " 1843, | " 6 |
| " 1844, | " 42 | " 1844, | " 14 |
| " 1845, | " 15 | " 1845, | " 11 |
| " 1846, | " 40 | " 1846, | " 16 |
| " 1847, | " 28 | " 1847, | " 10 |
| " 1848, | " 20 | " 1848, | " 19 |
| TOTAL 261 | | TOTAL 133* | |

* We are obliged to include, in this number of suicides, certain audacious appeals to public feeling, now and then made by individuals, who, in broad daylight, walk through the midst of the fashionable crowd, and then walk quietly into the water, because it does sometimes happen that they are drowned. As if to show how even revolting crimes may be tinged with the ridiculous, women have been known to tie one end of a long rope round their waists and the other to a tree, and then to commit suicide by drowning, thus throwing away life, but still wishing that some care should be taken of the perishable tenement of their troubled spirit. The bridge is the favourite resort of those who are determined to commit suicide.

NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS TO SKATERS ON THE SERPENTINE AND THE
ORNAMENTAL WATERS IN ST. JAMES'S PARK, REGENT'S PARK,
AND KENSINGTON GARDENS, IN EACH YEAR, FROM 1838 TO 1848.

Kensington Gardens.

| Year | 1838, | No. 3 |
|------|-------|-------|
| " | 1839, | " 1 |
| " | 1840, | " 7 |
| " | 1841, | " 3 |
| " | 1842, | " 6 |
| " | 1843, | " 0 |
| " | 1844, | " 1 |
| " | 1845, | " 11 |
| " | 1846, | " 3 |
| " | 1847, | " 1 |
| " | 1848, | " 0 |

TOTAL 36

Serpentine.

| Year | 1838, | No. 15 |
|------|-------|--------|
| " | 1839, | " 7 |
| " | 1840, | " 0 |
| " | 1841, | " 15 |
| " | 1842, | " 3 |
| " | 1843, | " 2 |
| " | 1844, | " 20 |
| " | 1845, | " 9 |
| " | 1846, | " 14 |
| " | 1847, | " 3 |
| " | 1848, | " 3 |

TOTAL 91

St. James's Park.

| Year | 1838, | No. 11 |
|------|-------|--------|
| " | 1839, | " 0 |
| " | 1840, | " 7 |
| " | 1841, | " 4 |
| " | 1842, | " 11 |
| " | 1843, | " 8 |
| " | 1844, | " 0 |
| " | 1845, | " 46 |
| " | 1846, | " 24 |
| " | 1847, | " 42 |
| " | 1848, | " 5 |

TOTAL 158

Regent's Park.

| Year | 1838, | No. 4 |
|------|-------|-------|
| " | 1839, | " 2 |
| " | 1840, | " 26 |
| " | 1841, | " 26 |
| " | 1842, | " 21 |
| " | 1843, | " 11 |
| " | 1844, | " 9 |
| " | 1845, | " 17 |
| " | 1846, | " 0 |
| " | 1847, | " 0 |
| " | 1848, | " 10 |

TOTAL 126

Note 7, p. 26.—On St. James's Canal.

According to the Saxon chronicles, Westminster Abbey was founded by Sibert, King of Essex, A.D. 610, near the north extremity of Thorney Island, a small tract enclosed by two arms of the Thames, near London. It would, we think, be not difficult to trace, even at the present day, the ancient limits of this island. The arm of the river which enclosed "Thorney" on the south and east, appears to have been always the principal branch, and probably still pursues the identical course between Westminster and Lambeth which it had in the early Saxon era. But the western and northern arm has ceased to be continuous, and it appears to be

represented by what are now the Grosvenor Canal and the ornamental water in St. James's Park. The tract included between these canals and the river Thames is about one mile in length, by half as much in breadth, and comprises the lower part of Westminster, with most part of Pimlico. Agreeably to the statement in the Saxon records, the Abbey is near its northern extremity.

Note 8, p. 29.—11 & 12 Vict. c. 63, s. 58 & 80.

“And be it enacted, that the local board of health shall drain, cleanse, cover, or fill up, or cause to be drained, cleansed, covered, or filled up, all ponds, pools, open ditches, sewers, drains, and places containing or used for the collection of any drainage, filth, water, matter, or thing of an offensive nature, or likely to be prejudicial to health; and they shall cause written notice to be given to the person causing any such nuisance, or to the owner or occupier of any premises whereon the same exists, requiring him, within a time to be specified in such notice, to drain, cleanse, cover, or fill up, any such pond, pool, ditch, sewer, drain, or place, or to construct a proper sewer or drain for the discharge thereof, as the case may require; and if the person to whom such notice is given fail to comply therewith, the said local board shall execute the works mentioned or referred to therein, and the expenses incurred by them in so doing shall be recoverable by them from him in a summary manner, or by order of the said local board, shall be declared to be private improvement expenses, and be recoverable as such in the manner hereinafter provided: Provided always, that the said local board may order that the whole, or a portion of the expenses incurred, in respect of any such last-mentioned works, be defrayed out of the special or general district rates to be levied under this Act; and in case of any such order, the whole, or such portion of the expenses as may be mentioned therein, shall be defrayed and levied accordingly.”

This section does *not* apply to crown property. Probably the legislature considered that those who were so anxious to *compel* the performance of its provisions by others, would adopt them voluntarily themselves!

“And be it enacted, that whosoever shall bathe in any stream, reservoir, conduit, aqueduct, or other waterworks, belonging to or under the management or control of the local board of health, or in any reservoir, conduit, aqueduct, or other waterworks, constructed, continued, or maintained under this Act, in any parish or place in which there shall be no local board of health, or shall

wash, cleanse, throw, or cause to enter therein any animal rubbish, filth, stuff, or thing of any kind whatsoever, or shall cause or permit or suffer to run or be brought therein the water of any sink, sewer, drain, engine, or boiler, or other filthy, unwholesome, or improper water, or shall do anything whatsoever whereby any water belonging to the said local board or under their management or control, or whereby any water of or contained in any such reservoir, conduit, aqueduct, or other waterworks so constructed, continued, or maintained in any such parish or place as aforesaid shall be fouled, shall for every such offence forfeit a sum not exceeding five pounds, and a further sum of twenty shillings for each day whilst the offence is continued, after written notice in that behalf, which penalties shall be paid to the said local board; or in the case of a parish or place in which there shall be no local board of health, to the churchwardens and overseers of the poor, to be by them applied in aid of the rate for the relief of the poor of such parish or place."

Whilst such care is taken to preserve the waterworks, mentioned in this section, from contamination, was it right of the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, whose head is the President of the Board of Health, to allow the Serpentine to become a cesspool for the reception of the filth disgorged from the Ranelagh sewer, whilst professing to keep it as a place for healthful recreation, boating and swimming for the public?

*Note 9, p. 36.—The Nuisances and Contagious Diseases Act,
11 & 12 Vict. c. 123, s. 10.*

"And be it enacted, that from time to time after the issuing of any such order as last aforesaid, and whilst the same shall continue in force, the general board of health (in *Great Britain*), under the seal of the said board, and the hands of two or more members thereof, and in *Ireland* the commissioners of health for the time being, under the hands of two or more of them, may issue *such directions and regulations* as the said board or last-mentioned commissioners (as the case may be) shall think fit for the prevention, as far as possible, or mitigation, of such epidemic, endemic, or contagious diseases, and from time to time, in like manner, revoke, renew, and alter any such directions and regulations, or substitute such new directions and regulations as to the said board or last-mentioned commissioners may appear expedient; and the said board or last-mentioned commissioners, as the case may be, may *by such directions and regulations provide* for the frequent and effectual cleansing of streets and public ways and places by the surveyors, district or assistant surveyors of highways, trustees,

county surveyors, and others by law intrusted with the care and management thereof, or by the owners and occupiers of houses and tenements adjoining thereto, and for the cleansing, purifying, ventilating, and disinfecting of houses, dwellings, churches, buildings, and places of assembly, by the owners or occupiers and persons having the care and ordering thereof, for the removal of nuisances, for the speedy interment of the dead, and generally for preventing or mitigating such epidemic, endemic, or contagious diseases, in such manner as to the said board or last-mentioned commissioners (as the case may be) may seem expedient; and the said board or last-mentioned commissioners may by any such directions and regulations authorize and require the guardians of the poor in *England* and *Ireland*, and the parochial boards for the management of the poor in *Scotland*, by themselves or their officers, or any persons employed by them in the administration of the laws for the relief of the poor, or by officers specially appointed in this behalf to superintend and see the execution of any such directions and regulations, and (where it shall appear that there may be default or delay in the execution thereof, by want or neglect of such surveyors, trustees, or others entrusted as aforesaid, or by reason of poverty of occupiers, or otherwise) to execute or aid in executing the same within their respective unions and parishes and combinations, and in any extra-parochial places adjoining to or surrounded by the same in which the directions and regulations of the said board or last-mentioned commissioners shall not be executed by the inhabitants, *and to provide for the dispensing of medicines*, and for affording to persons afflicted by or threatened with such epidemic, endemic, or contagious diseases *such medical aid* as may be required, and to do and provide all such acts, matters, and things as may be necessary for superintending or aiding in the execution of such directions and regulations, or for executing the same, as the case may require; and the directions and regulations to be issued as aforesaid shall extend to all parts or places in which the provisions of this Act for the prevention of epidemics, endemic, or contagious diseases shall for the time being be put in force under such orders as aforesaid, unless such directions and regulations shall be expressly confined to some of such parts or places, and then to such parts or places as in such directions and regulations shall be specified, and (subject to the power of revocation and alteration herein contained) shall continue in force so long as the said provisions of this Act shall be in force, under such orders, in the parts or places to which such directions and regulations shall under this provision extend: Provided always, that if at any time in *Ireland* there shall not be any commissioners of health the Lord Lieutenant or other chief governor or governors of *Ireland*, by his or their warrants, may appoint so many persons

as he or they may think fit, not being more in number than five, to act as commissioners of health in *Ireland*, without salary, fee, or reward, and may from time to time remove any of such commissioners, and appoint any other person in his stead; and such commissioners shall for all purposes be commissioners of health in *Ireland*, within the meaning and for the purposes of this Act."

It appears, then, that under this clause the board of health is entitled to issue *directions and regulations*, but that the objects of these *directions and regulations* are distinctly specified; and it doth nowhere appear that the board of health is to write *prescriptions* for the people. On the contrary, it is bound to see that the poor-law guardians do provide *for* the dispensing of medicine *by properly qualified medical officers*. The board of health was not, then, in any way authorized by the Act to *prescribe a dietary regimen* to the people, nor *to dose* them (wholesale) with opium and other drugs; and in doing so, it has assumed duties which, by Act of Parliament, the board is bound to see fulfilled *only* by others. Putting, therefore, aside the absurdity of its prescriptions in a medical point of view, we may at least blame the board for officiously issuing them. One would have thought that an Act so lately passed would have been better understood, and that the legal member of the board of health would not have allowed it to trespass on the duties (and therefore the privileges) of others. But it seems as if this ill-fated board were attempting to prove by its measures that it is a most sorrowful sample of legislative ineptitude. It (the board) will, however, (though in blind unwillingness,) contribute to the ultimate good of the country by practically manifesting, in its own acts, how great is the necessity for a speedy reform.

Note 10, p. 45.—At Baillieborough Union.

Who have these poor-law guardians appointed as inspectors of nuisances?—men ignorant or incapable—their servants or their beadles! as if there were any great chance of such *independent* inspectors being *very* clear-sighted. What do they esteem the perilling of life in the fulfilment of such duties—12s., 15s., or 20s. One of our own medical brethren, rather than see his children starve, accepted this dangerous trust at a remuneration of 25s. per week. Ten days afterwards he was a corpse—he had fallen a victim to typhus. But still we can boast of feeling, of gratitude, of philanthropy. No!—we are dead to feeling, oblivious of benefits conferred; our philanthropy is mere humbug, and our vaunted Christianity a tissue of conventionalities.

Note 11, p. 48.—The Quarantine at Madeira.

The following is an extract from a letter dated Funchal-bay, brig Brilliant, Saturday night, Nov. 18:—

“After a most delightful and surprising voyage of less than six days, we cast anchor here on Thursday afternoon, the 16th inst., about half-past three o'clock, sceing at once, upon entering the bay, the destiny that awaited us, by the yellow flags around us upon the recently arrived English vessels; the health boat soon announced to us our fate—‘twenty days’ quarantine, including passage,’ leaving us, consequently, as fast sailers, fourteen to perform. Looking at the audacious inconsistency and absurdity of our own government, we could expect nothing less; in fact, my squeaking old friend ‘Muno,’ holding us at arm’s length, not deeming us fit to be touched even with a pair of tongs, threw it in our teeth the moment we opened our mouths, ‘Why, your own government, at Gibraltar, have first put on fifteen days’ quarantine in like manner.’ What is to be answered to so plain a statement of so absurd a fact? One cannot even fret or fume at suffering such annoyance from a poor, ignorant, contemptible government, encouraged, if not misled, by the gross absurdity and ignorance of our own.”

THE BETHNAL-GREEN NUISANCE.

“To the Editor of the Times.

“SIR,—In answer to your correspondent’s letter in the *Times* of Saturday, respecting the frightful mass of dung, filth, and other refuse collected on the banks of the Regent’s Canal, at the back of the Prichard’s-road, Hackney-road, and which has caused typhus, scarlatina, and other fevers to a dreadful extent for some time past, and has now, as your correspondent states, a fatal case of cholera, I beg to inform him, in answer to his question ‘Can anything be done?’ that all has been done that the ‘Nuisances Removal and Contagious Diseases Prevention Act’ directs; but through the supineness or wilful neglect of the parish officers, it still remains. Thirteen medical men living near the spot inspected the premises, and certified that it was highly dangerous to the health of the surrounding inhabitants, and had been, and was likely to be, the cause of fever and epidemic disease. These certificates, with the notice directed by the Act, signed by a great number of persons residing in the neighbourhood, were sent in to the board of guardians for Bethnal-green about the 20th of last month. In answer to the question, ‘Can anything now be done?’ ‘An application must be made immediately to the Court of Queen’s Bench, for a *mandamus* to compel the board of guardians to do their duty, or the party

may be indicted at the sessions for causing the nuisance.' The delay that must take place in either case (which the Act was passed to prevent) may be of the most dreadful consequence both to the health and property of the surrounding neighbourhood.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“ A SUBSCRIBER.”

IN the *Times* of the 28th ult. we find it remarked, that “ there may be many cases in which a mere local board may find it difficult to screw up their courage to enforce the Act, and we therefore recommend, that instead of applications being made to local authorities, they should be made to the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers, who comprise all the members of the General Board of Health.

“ *To the Editor of the Times.*

“ SIR,—Observing a paragraph in your paper of to-day, recommending parties who were unable to procure the removal of nuisances by boards of guardians to apply to the Commissioners of Sewers for that purpose, I beg to mention, that six weeks ago I made an application to the latter body in reference to a foul and offensive drain or ditch in this immediate vicinity, and their surveyor inspected it, and informed me it should be cleaned out forthwith: this promise, however, not having been redeemed, I again wrote to them on the subject—now four weeks since—but no notice whatever has been taken of the matter. An application to the board of guardians of this parish has also been without result; so that it appears the public are not likely to benefit much by the ‘Nuisances Removal Act.’—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“ H. BROOKS.

“ 10, Phillimore-terrace, Kensington,

Nov. 29.”

A man poisons his neighbours by his wholesale boiling and crushing of bones; he is indicted under the Nuisance Act, before the Lambeth Police Court. The magistrate decides that the legislature would never have interfered with *commercial interests* without making special provision for compensation, and that the bone boiler and crusher may continue to infect the neighbourhood, because, forsooth, the miasmata he generates are the necessary results of his craft.

This “Act for the Prevention of Contagious Diseases and the Removal of Nuisances” is, then, nothing more than a *legal fiction*. A *monstrous nuisance* may be known to exist, but it may decimate a neighbourhood before it *can be removed*, before contagious diseases can be prevented, supposing even the possibility of their definitive prevention by order of the Privy Council.

To appear in the Month of January.

AN ESSAY

ON

THE TREATMENT OF OVARIAN DROPSY,

AND ON

The Treatment

OF

THE OTHER FORMS OF OVARIAN DISEASE;

WITH

PRACTICAL REMARKS ON THEIR CONNEXION
WITH STERILITY.

BY

EDWARD JOHN TILT, M.D.

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AND TO THE PADDINGTON FREE DISPENSARY FOR DISEASES OF
WOMEN AND CHILDREN, ETC. ETC.

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